



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE

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BENITEZ CONSECRATED AS TEXAS BISHOP

HOUSTON -- More than 4,000 Texas Episcopalians were on hand in Albert Thomas Convention Center here Sept. 13 to take part in the ordination and consecration of the Rt. Rev. Maurice M. Benitez as the sixth bishop of Texas. Thousands more saw it in a two-hour live telecast over Houston's Channel Two. It was the first time a religious event of that calibre had been aired in its entirety as a public service in this viewing area.

At least 16 Episcopal bishops, two bishops-elect, a Roman Catholic bishop and a variety of leaders of other denominations and religious organizations processed with the 247 clergy canonically resident in the Diocese of Texas, choirs from 42 Episcopal churches, acolytes, lay men and women leaders of the diocese.

Presiding Bishop John M. Allin was the consecrator and preacher. He called on the new bishop to "watch in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist and fulfill your ministry." The new bishop's co-consecrators were Bishops John E. Hines, Presiding Bishop retired; Scott Field Bailey of West Texas; Harold C. Gosnell, retired of West Texas, and A. Donald Davies of Dallas.

At a box lunch and program afterwards, Hines recalled the time in Houston -- the 1970 General Convention -- when he had three bodyguards. He reminded the new bishop that a spiritual leader who never offends anyone nor is offended by anyone could wind up as the lump in the leaven instead of the leaven.

Benitez said it was "awesome to reflect on the task before me" but expressed his gratitude for the warm support he had received.

The 52-year-old Washington, D.C.-born clergyman was elected to this position on the eighth ballot at a day-long session of the diocesan council in Christ Church Cathedral here on June 13.

For the past six years Benitez was rector of the Church of St. John the Divine here. He was elected by the 1979 General Convention to a six-year term on the national Executive Council. He succeeded Bishop J. Milton Richardson who died last March 24.

